

Gift

by dracontia

Summary: Harry's been contemplating giving a gift; Ron beats him to it. Part of the 'A Credit to Their Houses' Universe.

One Shot Credit To Their Houses Sequel

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: In the unauthorized borrowing of these characters, I benefit solely from the exercise afforded my writing faculties. (Clearly, I am running out of ideas for these disclaimers after some 200 of them over close to a decade of various short stories and individual chapters.)

Note: Our intrepid troublemakers are in their Fifth Year at this point. (I am of course referring to Rose, Scorpius, and Albus Severus.)

"Got a minute, Boss?" Ron grinned when Harry grimaced.

"You know I—"

"—hate it when I call you that. Yeah, second verse, same as the first, mate." He noticed that Harry was trying (unsuccessfully) to hide a catalog amid the parchments on his desk. He must have stuffed it in haphazardly just before Ron's entrance, since the mess was of sufficient magnitude that a Pygmy Puff colony could have been secreted there, given a little time and planning.

Interesting...

"By your reckoning, I'm 'Captain,' you're 'First Mate,'" Harry said, bringing Ron's thoughts back to the matter at hand. Not that he'd let Harry off, of course.

"Aye, sir, and reporting—well, on reports. If you have the time, that is." Ron always gave Harry the out. Some days he would rather Harry took it, for as much as Ron enjoyed discussing the progress of various recruits, he didn't relish picking through the cauldron dregs and quill sheddings of their parchmentwork.

"Nothing but," Harry said. The smile wasn't strained around his eyes—much.

Ron contained his own more genuine smile. With anyone else, Harry would have lied smoothly; however, he still felt guilty at being promoted over Ron, despite Ron's aptitude test showing him to be rather the better tactician and organizer. Harry would drop anything, at any time, to oblige his best mate.

Not that this was strictly necessary. Ron was entirely happy that Harry was head of the department. Being Deputy-Chief meant that Ron was in charge of training and recruitment, which was infinitely more interesting than running the place. Sure, Harry being Harry had a little to do with the promotion; but that was worth a roll of the eyes at most. Seniority tipped the balance, and Ron stood by his choice to take a year off training to get George's store and Hermione's parents sorted out. Things couldn't possibly have worked better.

Still, it was kind of fun to be able to get inside Harry's head a little bit after all these years, so he wasn't planning on telling Harry any of that just yet.

"There's not much, really; Hardison is still back of the pack, but otherwise shaping credibly. The only real issue is Phillips. We're boring her to death in training, though she's too disciplined to admit it," Ron said, not without a touch of pride. Phillips was something of a prodigy, and he felt honored to train her.

Harry leaned forward slightly, keen with interest. He skimmed the array of test scores and evaluations. "I guess I'm going to have to authorize an early probation run. You couldn't talk this Phillips up more if you were a paid endorser." Harry smirked slightly. "I'd better give her a chance to prove herself, otherwise Hermione will get suspicious."

There were jokes, and there were jokes. Harry didn't quite cross THE line, but he nudged it *Right, that means playing with both Bludgers on the pitch.*

"Hah, hah. Well, I suppose I should break the good news. Say, what's this?" Ron scooped up a catalog that Harry had been trying to hide when he retrieved his reports.

"Just looking at formal robes in case I can't get out of attending the Ministry Christmas party this year," Harry said, trying to act casual and failing.

"Uh huh," Ron said, nodding to emphasize just how convinced he was. "Well, good luck with that. I'm sure you'll look almost as good in your robes as Al and James do in theirs, and be just as comfortable."

"Thanks a lot," Harry said. Ron knew exactly the sort of wry look he'd get out of that remark.

"Oh, and just so you we don't duplicate efforts—when you order your robes, don't worry about getting the ones for Scorpius. I already had them made up based on the measurements you wrote in the margins and sent them along," Ron said. He was very proud of himself for managing not to grin like a loon when he said it, especially since Harry managed, as was still his wont when someone managed to truly shock him, to choke on nothing but air. Ron Summoned a glass and spelled water into it with a few automatic wand motions. Any Auror who couldn't do that much nonverbally after all their years on the job needed to be chained to a desk where he or she couldn't do too much damage. *Phillips is already good at it. I would've hated that kid as a classmate, but she's a gem as a student.*

"You sent him...?" and he could see the ideas running through Harry's head, of all the horrid designs Ron would have chosen as a bad joke on Malfoy back in the day (if he'd had the money to play that sort of joke when they were younger.) "Ron, you wouldn't—"

"Relax," Ron said, deciding to let Harry off the hook before yelling was involved. Some days, Harry rivaled Hermione—or Mum. "I bought the blue woolen ones you marked, with the fancy cuffs and collar. Those brocade ones were too flash. Can't imagine what you were thinking."

Harry was looking at him with that amazed expression that Hermione still had whenever Ron got something incredibly right. Ron thought he ought to get some sort of commendation for not rolling his eyes. *Way to have faith in me after all these years. No wonder I still like baiting you two when I get the chance! Why?* Harry said, as at a loss for words as he'd ever been when they were kids.

"I could ask you the same thing, mate," Ron said easily. "Shall we just say that we both thought Scorpius is a nice kid who doesn't deserve to go to a ball dressed like a mothballed vicar, and leave it at that?"

In truth, he wasn't entirely sure why Harry was taking such an interest in Malfoy's kid. He had his suspicions, of course—it wasn't common knowledge that Harry and Ginny were 'taking a little break'—but he'd really rather not have them confirmed. The now-annual New Year's Eve get-together at the Malfoy's was already bizarre without contemplating how Harry happened to know where everything was in their kitchen and felt free to go fetch it at will; or how Malfoy (subspecies Draco) always seemed to watch him go... and not with suspicion.

The fact that smarmy Finch-Fletchly used those occasions to sniff around Ginny (with her apparent approval) hurt his brain quite enough, thanks.

"I'm beginning to see how Rose got into Slytherin," Harry said dryly.

"I maintain **that's** Hermione's fault," Ron said, throwing up his hands. Harry laughed, and they resolved to actually eat lunch somewhere (a) other than their desks and (b) together, before Ron headed back to his own office.

As for Ron's reason behind buying Scorpius Malfoy a set of formal robes, well... Harry didn't need to know about the note he'd pinned to them.

To Scorpius Malfoy:

Ask her before someone else does, or you'll definitely find out what it's like for Rose to 'never forgive you.' And for God's sake, don't take my little girl to the ball in some ridiculous vicar outfit, or I'll find an excuse to arrest your sorry arse.

Not joking,

Ronald B. Weasley, Deputy-Chief Auror

P.S. Stay out of the rose garden and have her back to her dorm before 10 p.m., or ditto the last bit. Definitely not joking.

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